

## V. Ways to Reduce Tobacco Use that are Consistent with Efforts to Assist U.S. Tobacco Farmers and Reduce their Economic Problems

The Commission heard testimony from a number of witnesses about the critical public health importance of doing more to reduce the public health impact of tobacco, particularly in the tobacco-growing regions which have suffered disproportionately because of higher smoking rates and other forms of tobacco use. Numerous witnesses testified that they believed that the problems of tobacco growers and the public health were inextricably intertwined.

The Commission also received a number of recommendations about ways in which the health interests could be promoted that also positively impact the tobacco farming communities and the Commission seeks comments on these suggestions.

There was a good deal of discussion about the need for expanded comprehensive tobacco prevention and cessation efforts designed to prevent young people from starting, educate, encourage and assist adults who wish to quit to do so, and take steps to reduce the harm caused by tobacco products. The Commission concluded that comprehensive programs, such as those suggested in the August 2000 Report of the Surgeon General, to reduce tobacco use and the harm caused by tobacco should be adopted with special attention to the need for these programs in tobacco growing states. These programs should be based on the best available science and should be tailored to the needs of individual communities. The Commission has not yet addressed the issue of how these programs should be funded, but as is the case with the programs to be developed to assist farmers and their communities, these programs will need a reliable and sustained funding base.

The Commission also heard testimony about the importance of establishing a fair and equitable regulatory mechanism for tobacco

that protects both the public health and farmers. The Commission concluded that the FDA should be provided with effective authority over the sale, distribution, labeling, marketing and manufacturing of tobacco products with the USDA retaining its authority to set safety standards governing tobacco farms. This authority should be comparable to FDA's authority over other products. The authority should include measures to prevent the use of tobacco by young people, encourage and assist adults who wish to quit to do so, require full disclosure of ingredients, harmful constituents and other information FDA considers necessary to protect the public health, prevent misleading labeling and claims, evaluate the relative harmfulness of different products, ingredients and constituents and set safety standards for the product itself. Its goal should be the promotion of public health, but not the banning of tobacco products. Support for this objective was specified in the Core Principles adopted by farmers and public health groups in 1998.

---

***“I should clarify that when I say FDA regulation of tobacco, we don’t mean that we support FDA on the farm. However, we do feel that there ought to be some oversight to the manufacture of this product, especially with the emergence of contracting. An industry ought not to have complete control of a product with such tremendous negative public health implications.”***

---

Joy Bechtold,  
American Cancer Society,  
Richmond, VA

---

The FDA should share overall responsibility with the USDA, EPA, and Federal Trade Commission in the oversight of tobacco and tobacco products. The USDA should have responsibility over the growing and production of tobacco; the EPA for the regulation of pesticide use; and the FDA for the regulation of manufactured tobacco products and oversight of tobacco manufacturers.

While the role of the FDA in protecting the public health is obvious, there may also be advantages to tobacco farmers and their communities. Growers in the United States pride themselves on the production of the best quality leaf in the world. FDA labeling of manufactured tobacco products that discloses content information, the establishment of manufacturing standards, EPA establishment of pesticide regulations and developing new uses for tobacco could improve the competitive position of U.S. growers both here and in international markets and positively impact on public health.

The Commission seeks comment on these health related recommendations, as well as suggestions for other options that the Commission should consider.